

## WATER: A VITAL NATURAL RESOURCE

Humans, fish and wildlife rely on the responsible stewardship of water supplies and other natural resources. Did you know that what we do in our homes, yards and communities can affect the quality of our water supplies? By learning about this connection, we can protect our waterways through prevention of what is known as “non-point source pollution.” This refers to the fact that surface water tends to pick up contaminants as it flows through a watershed. A watershed is an area of land which drains to a common basin, such as a stream or river.

### KEEPING WATER CLEAN

#### *Household Hazardous Waste*

Household waste containing chemicals harmful to human health and the environment must not be dumped, by law, into a storm drain or waterway. Examples include paint, solvents, pool chemicals and weed killers. This type of waste must be discarded properly through a household hazardous waste collection program. Storm drains discharge water directly to streams and rivers, untreated. Some household items contain mercury (in old thermometers and thermostats). Prescription drugs should not be rinsed or flushed down a drain, including toilets. For household hazardous waste collection information, call the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio at 871-5100 or visit their Web site at [www.swaco.org](http://www.swaco.org).

#### *Reporting Suspected Problems*

**Please report any questionable substances seen flowing in a storm sewer, ditch or waterway, along with any suspected sewer problems, to 311 or 645-3111.**

#### *Lawn Care*

- **Consider using native plants.** Plants native to our area thrive in our soil and weather conditions, requiring less water, fertilizer, pesticides and maintenance.
- **Spot treat problem areas.** The chemical runoff from fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides can be a major source of water pollution. Follow the instructions carefully, apply no more than the recommended amount and use these products as sparingly

as possible. Please check the weather forecast to avoid having to repeat the application.

- **Consider less toxic alternatives for weed removal.** Long-handled pullers grab many weeds easily, especially when the soil is moist. Allow beneficial insects like lady bugs into your garden to feed on pests. For better success, replace diseased or problem plants with native varieties.

- **Compost and mulch yard waste.** Build healthy soil by recycling organic material for plant growth. Use natural compost as opposed to chemical. For more information on composting, please call 645-3153.

- **Dispose of yard waste correctly** - it must be properly prepared and placed for collection. Leaves swept to the curb will not be collected in Columbus. Also, be aware that dumping yard waste into storm drains or waterways is prohibited. For yard waste collection information, please call 311 or 645-3111.



#### *Reducing Stormwater Runoff*

- **Pave less and landscape more.** Pave only the area needed on your property. Landscaped areas absorb water and generate less runoff than hard-surface areas. Green space also provides a natural pollutant filtering system.

- **Collect rainwater for future use.** Catch spring and summer showers in a rain barrel to water plants on dry

summer days. Use soaker hoses or drip irrigation in flower and vegetable gardens to allow for deep, infrequent watering.

- **Plant a rain garden.** Add landscape interest and reduce the amount of stormwater entering the rivers. Deep rooted native plants arranged in a bowl shaped garden slow and filter rainwater before it enters streams and rivers. Please visit our Web site for links to more information.

- **Plant trees and shrubs.** The roots hold water in the ground, slowing runoff and soil erosion. Trees also help air quality and lower air conditioning costs.

#### *Pet Waste*

**Remove pet waste from your yard** and place it in the trash, bagged. Animal waste contributes to surface and ground water bacteria.

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## OTHER WAYS TO GET GREEN - AND SAVE MONEY

**1. Compact fluorescent bulbs use less electricity** and last much longer than incandescent bulbs.

**2. Turn off lights, televisions and other items when not in use.** Beware of “energy vampires” that may continue to draw power unless unplugged, such as battery chargers.

**3. Use window blinds or curtains** to block the sunlight in the summer and to help insulate against drafts in the winter.

**4. When replacing appliances, look for the Energy Star label for better efficiency and electricity savings.** When replacing a refrigerator, consider those with bottom drawer freezers. Defrost older models as needed to keep them running as efficiently as possible. Front-loading washing machines use less water.

**5. Ceiling fans help ventilate rooms and reduce the need for air conditioning.** In the summer, air flow from the fan should direct down. The reverse setting is recommended in the winter, which is particularly helpful with high ceilings.

**6. Caulk cracks around windows to seal out drafts.** Consider replacing older drafty windows with new windows that are more efficient. (They may qualify for a tax deduction too - check with your tax preparer for advice).

**7. Putting an extra blanket on the bed** on cold nights can allow the thermostat to be set at a lower temperature.

**8. To control heating and cooling costs, dress warmly in the winter and wear very light clothing in the summer.**

**9. Set the clothes dryer timer for no longer than is needed.** Consider replacing older models with more efficient ones. Clean the lint filter after each load for optimal efficiency. Better yet, hang dry laundry.

**10. Change furnace filters monthly or consider a reusable one that can be cleaned.** Have furnaces inspected annually. Consider replacing older models with higher efficiency models. Adjust temperatures when you won’t be home - programmable thermostats are helpful for this.

**11. Insulate water heaters with a tank blanket** available at hardware stores. Set the temperature no higher than necessary. At replacement time, consider on-demand models, which heat water as it is used.

**12. Recommendations for attic insulation have changed** over the years. Contact a professional for advice.

**13. Keep your chimney flue closed when the fireplace is not in use.** Lock-top chimney caps can be installed to help seal out cold air.

**14. Solar energy can be used to power a variety of things in the home.** Additionally, many stores carry solar landscape lights that work well in sunny areas. Check various web sites from an Internet search for other ideas.

**15. Please recycle all recyclable plastic, paper, glass and metal at your nearest city-provided recycling drop box.** Call 311 or 645-3111 for more information.

**16. Run dishwashers and washing machines only on full loads and use the shorter cycle if possible.**

**17. Fix all faucet drips. Turn off the faucet when brushing your teeth** and other times when water is not being used.

**18. Maintain toilets to prevent wasting water from leaks.** Consider replacing them with newer low-flow models.

**19. Replace shower heads with low-flow models.** Because sewer charges are based on water consumption, conserving water helps lower water *and* sewer bills.

**20. Use public transportation, bicycles and walk whenever possible.** If your employer allows you to work from home, that can save gasoline and reduce air pollution. Consider replacing your gas guzzler with a more fuel efficient car such as a hybrid.

**21. Prairies are an attractive and low maintenance landscape option that reduces the amount of grass to be mowed, saving gasoline and helping air pollution.**

**22. Mow grass only as needed, avoiding it on ozone alert days when air quality is already a concern.** Agencies to check with include the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and Columbus Public Health.

**23. To maintain a healthy and green lawn, normally one inch of water a week is enough.** Sprinklers should be used only as needed instead of on a timer which may come on during rain. Call 311 or 645-3111 for a free watering gauge.

**24. For more ideas, please visit:**  
**[www.getgreencolumbus.org](http://www.getgreencolumbus.org).**





### Household Kitchen Grease

**Cooking grease or oil should not be dumped down indoor or outdoor drains.** Please place it a sealable container such as a lidded coffee can to be thrown away. Grease can create blockages in sewers, causing sewer backups into basements and sewer overflows into waterways.

### Litter

**Trash left along our roadways and neighborhoods washes into our waterways through rain and melting snow.** Not only is littering an eyesore, it is illegal, it can endanger wildlife and may allow stagnant water to breed mosquitoes. Debris can also block drain inlets, preventing efficient drainage.

### Maintaining Vehicles and Driveways

- **Maintain vehicles to prevent leaking fluids from washing into stormwater.**
- **Absorb leaks on the driveway** with sand or cat litter, then sweep and place in the trash.
- **Wash cars at a car wash, or over gravel if possible,** to avoid the soapy runoff from entering the storm drains. Car washes are required to drain the water through the sanitary sewer system, where it will be treated.
- **Sweep debris from sidewalks and driveways** instead of washing it away with water.

### WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Volunteers are needed for litter cleanups along waterways and to help with the “No Dumping, Drains to Rivers” storm drain marking project. These programs are the ideal community service activity for either an individual or a group, including neigh-

borhood and youth groups. Watershed cleanups are held each year, including during Central Ohio River Pride Month in May, and other opportunities are available through your local watershed group. Call **645-STREAM (7873)** for more information or visit the Department of Public Utilities’ Web site (address below).

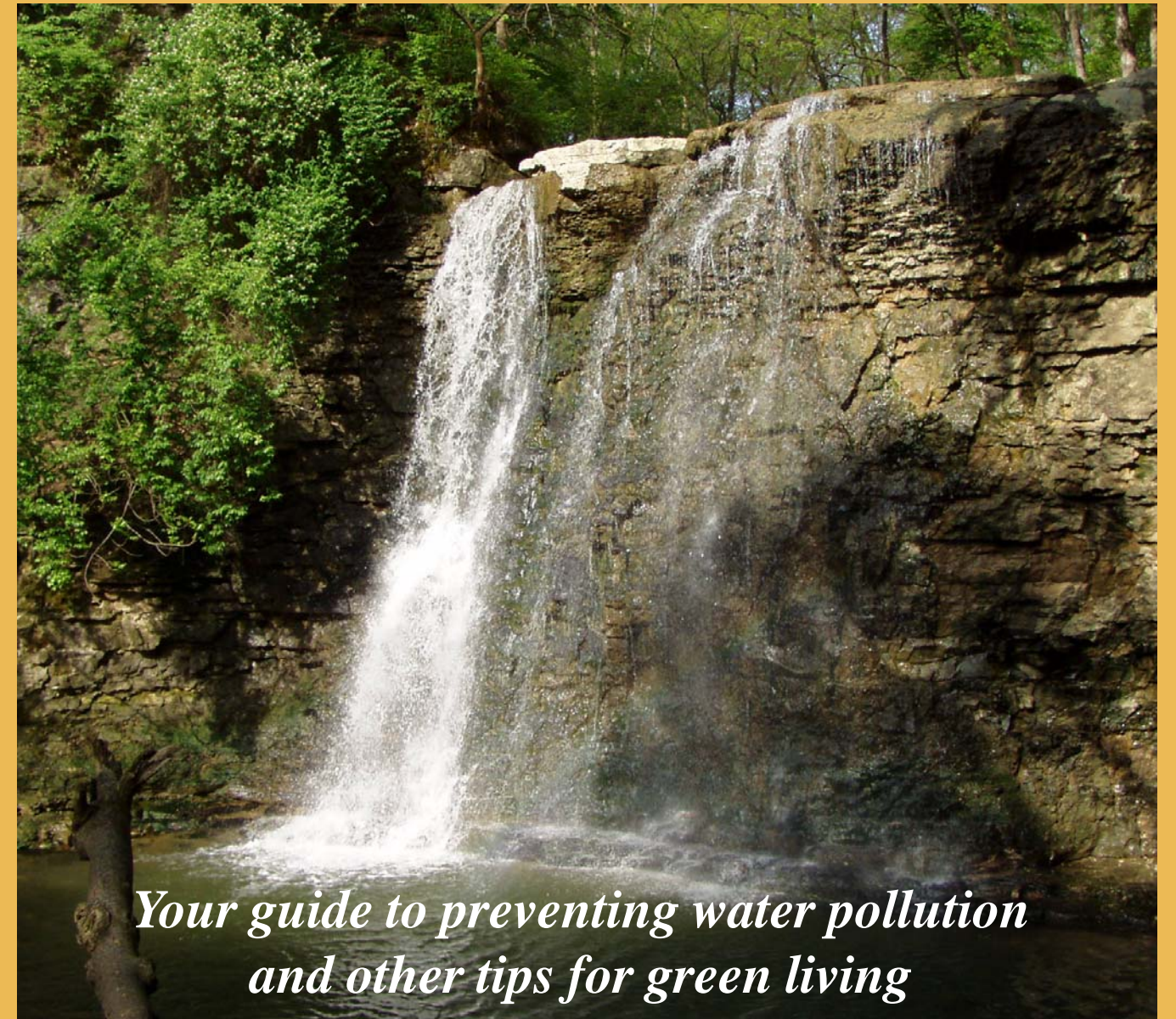


### COLUMBUS’ CLEAN WATER COMMITMENT

The Department of Public Utilities provides many services to protect water quality including:

- A comprehensive approach to stormwater management, using best management practices.
- A sediment and erosion control program to manage the impact of construction sites on local waterways.
- A Wet Weather Management Plan, developed by the Division of Sewerage and Drainage, is underway to address sanitary and combined sewer infrastructure needs and to reduce sewer overflows.
- An Industrial Waste Pre-treatment Section monitors over 100 industries that discharge to the Columbus sewer system. The section also administers a fats, oils and grease program overseeing food service establishments.
- A Watershed Management program protects drinking water source quality. The Division of Power and Water participates in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), which is designed to help minimize the impact from agricultural activities occurring upstream from our water supply.
- The department is regulated by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, meets requirements of various permits, and has received many awards for its compliance records.

# WE ALL LIVE DOWNSTREAM



*Your guide to preventing water pollution  
and other tips for green living*



For more information,  
please call 311, 645-3111  
or visit [www.utilities.columbus.gov](http://www.utilities.columbus.gov)

